

result is downloaded in a format corresponding to a processing capability of each terminal (for example, a portable telephone, a visual telephone, a personal computer or the like) to the terminal through one of various types of networks such as a radio type network.

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An image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention comprises a data base for registering an image including a time-varying picture or a static picture with a feature descriptor or a plurality of feature descriptors of the image, image retrieving means for retrieving the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors registered in the data base according to a retrieval condition input by a user and obtaining a retrieval result satisfying the retrieval condition, and contents additional service means for editing and processing the retrieval result according to a download condition obtained from a user terminal side on which the retrieval result is to be received. Therefore, because an output form of the retrieval result and a format of an output image are edited and processed according to the download condition of the user terminal side, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the contents additional service means comprises terminal information obtaining means for obtaining terminal information of the user terminal as the download condition. Therefore, because an output form of the retrieval result and a format of an output image are edited and processed according to a processing capability of the user terminal, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

AI In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the contents additional service means produces data, which relates to the retrieval result and of which the reception in the user terminal is possible, according to the download condition specified by the user and transmits the data to the user terminal before the transmission of the retrieval result. Therefore, the user can easily retrieve a desired image from images of various kinds of retrieval results.

An image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention further comprises contents description meta-data producing means for extracting a feature degree of each of a plurality of input images and format information of the input image and producing a feature descriptor or a plurality of feature

descriptors of each input image, and data storing unit for registering the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors produced by the contents description meta-data producing means and the input image relating to the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors in the data base. Therefore, the data base having the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors which can be easily compared with the download condition can be obtained from each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

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In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the contents additional service means comprises converting means for converting an image format and an output format in the image of the retrieval result into those suitable for the terminal information of the user terminal, filtering means for performing no transmission of the retrieval result which does not suit the terminal information, or replacing means for replacing the retrieval result not suitable for the terminal information with substitutive data suitable for the terminal information. Therefore, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the contents additional service means transmits the retrieval result, which is not edited or processed, to another terminal specified by the user in advance when the retrieval result is edited and processed according to the terminal information of the user terminal. Therefore, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

AI In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the contents additional service means comprises a plurality of editing means for respectively editing and processing the retrieval result not suitable for the terminal information of the user terminal, and the plurality of editing means are properly selectable in one of an image retrieval requiring side, an image retrieval performing side and a contents providing side on which the images are registered in the data base. Therefore, the retrieval can be performed while reflecting an intention of the image retrieval requiring side, the image retrieval performing side or the contents providing side.

In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the image format includes at least one of a sign format of the image of the retrieval result, a bit rate, a frame

rate, a resolution degree and a file size. Therefore, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

In an image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention, the contents additional service means produces the data, which relates to the retrieval result and of which the reception in the user terminal is possible, according to copyright information and/or a distribution condition of the image of the retrieval result. Therefore, the user can easily retrieve a desired image from images of various kinds of retrieval results.

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An image retrieving and downloading system according to the present invention comprises a data base for registering an image including a time-varying picture or a static picture with a feature descriptor or a plurality of feature descriptors of the image, image retrieving means for retrieving the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors registered in the data base according to a retrieval condition input by a user and obtaining a retrieval result satisfying the retrieval condition, output control means for transmitting the retrieval result and the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors relating to the retrieval result to a user terminal, and contents description meta-data analyzing means, arranged in the user terminal, for analyzing the feature descriptor

or the feature descriptors transmitted from the output control means and determining whether or not the retrieval result is to be received. Therefore, because the user can distinguish the retrieval result by analyzing the feature of the image of the retrieval result and meta-data describing a format of the image, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

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An image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention comprises an image retrieving step of retrieving a feature descriptor or a plurality of feature descriptors of an image registered in a data base according to a retrieval condition input by a user and obtaining a retrieval result satisfying the retrieval condition, and a contents additional service step of editing and processing the retrieval result according to a download condition obtained from a user terminal side on which the retrieval result is to be received. Therefore, because an output form of the retrieval result and a format of an output image are edited and processed according to the download condition of the user terminal side, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

In an image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention, the contents additional service step includes a step of obtaining terminal information of the user terminal as the download condition. Therefore, because an output format of the retrieval result and a format of an output image are edited and processed according to a processing capability of the user terminal, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

AI In an image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention, the contents additional service step includes a step of producing data, which relates to the retrieval result and of which the reception in the user terminal is possible, according to the download condition specified by the user and a step of transmitting the data to the user terminal before the transmission of the retrieval result. Therefore, the user can easily retrieve a desired image from images of various kinds of retrieval results.

An image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention further comprises a contents description meta-data producing step of extracting a feature degree of the image and format information of the image when the image is input and producing the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors, and a

data storing step of registering the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors, produced in the contents description meta-data producing step and the input image in the data base. Therefore, a data base having the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors which can be easily compared with the download condition can be obtained from each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

AI In an image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention, the contents additional service step includes at least one of a converting step of converting an image format and an output format in the image of the retrieval result into those suitable for the terminal information of the user terminal, a filtering step of performing no transmission of the retrieval result which does not suit the terminal information, and a replacing step of replacing the retrieval result not suitable for the terminal information with substitutive data suitable for the terminal information. Therefore, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.

In an image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention, the contents additional service step includes a step of transmitting the retrieval result, which is not edited or

processed, to another terminal specified by the user in advance when the retrieval result is edited and processed according to the terminal information of the user terminal. Therefore, the retrieval can be performed while reflecting an intention of the image retrieval requiring side, the image retrieval performing side or the contents providing side.

AI In an image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention, the contents additional service step includes a step of producing the data, which relates to the retrieval result and of which the reception in the user terminal is possible, according to copyright information and/or a distribution condition of the image of the retrieval result. Therefore, the user can easily retrieve a desired image from images of various kinds of retrieval results.

An image retrieving and downloading method according to the present invention comprises an image retrieving step of retrieving a feature descriptor or a plurality of feature descriptors of an image registered in a data base according to a retrieval condition input by a user and obtaining a retrieval result satisfying the retrieval condition, an output control step of transmitting the retrieval result and the feature descriptor or the feature descriptors relating to the retrieval result to a user terminal, and a contents description meta-data analyzing step of analyzing the feature

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descriptor or the feature descriptors transmitted in the output control step and determining on the user terminal side whether or not the retrieval result is to be received. Therefore, because the user can distinguish the retrieval result by analyzing the feature of the image of the retrieval result and meta-data describing a format of the image, the retrieval result can be easily displayed in each of various types of terminals having processing capabilities different from each other.--
